

Creature of the Night II

“FOURTEEN! Your number is up!”

Spike jerked his head up from his chest, wiping away the drool at his mouth. That promise he made earlier to stay awake through the whole ordeal was broken and now he felt mad at his inability to keep his eyes open under such important circumstances. Hopping off his chair he toddled over to the window, slipping his small square ticket under the plastic barrier.

“Fourteen here. Can I please go see her now?” he pleaded looking up to Nurse Redheart with wide open eyes. Swiveling her head she delivered a short series of questions to a figure behind her before opening the door to let the little purple dragon down the hallway.

“How is she nurse? Have they fixed what’s wrong with her yet? What made her get so sick overnight? When did the doc-”

The nurse shushed him nicely as possible “I’m afraid I don’t have any of those answers for you Spike. I’m not really privy to that information. The doctor will more than likely have answers for you.” Pushing open the door she motioned for Spike to enter before letting it quietly swing shut.

The doctor standing over the bed looked just as weary as Spike. Toiling round the clock to figure out precisely what illness had stricken the young purple filly to warrant his appearance two hours before the crack of dawn. It was around brunch when he got his patient stabilized, and mid-afternoon when he pinpointed the disease addling the pony lying supine in the stretcher before him. He’d heard the barrage of questions delivered to his nurse from the hallway, so he immediately stopped him before that could start up again.

“Spike, I understand that you’re under a great deal of stress right now. So much so you were practically stumbling over your words this morning when you brought your friend all the way here under your own power.”

The little dragons green eyes lit up slightly. Adrenaline had been the savior of many situations that summoned inner strength to help a friend in need. Twilight Sparkle was much heavier than this baby dragon. He was certain that this was the first time he had to carry her around.

The doctor smiled and continued “I’m going to ask you to please recount the events leading up to the moment you left the library. After you do, I can likely confirm the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ parts to your questions. The ‘who’ and ‘why’ will be something far beyond my medical investigations. So...begin Spike, tell me what happened.”

Spike nodded, taking a deep breath as the events that conspired this morning

flowed back from memory...

“Urrrgh....Spiiiiike...”

Spike stirred, not especially happy to slip out of his half-formed dream atop his mountain of multi-colored gems. He burrowed further into his blue blanket “Whaddya want Twi? It’s waaay too early....you know we aren’t changing any seasons today dont’cha?”

“I know that,” retorted his superior “Spike I feel...like being up so just roll yourself out of bed and brew some tea with breakfast like you usually do for me.”

This was his bedtime; breakfast was something Twilight ate during the morning when the sun went up. Her alarm being the warm streams of light pouring through the window. It was still pitch black outside. Spike didn’t budge.

“Pleeeeeaaase Spike?”

“Fine,” he finally said jumping out of his comfy bed. “I’ll start cookin’ for ya. Come downstairs when you smell it okay?”

He heard a short happy sigh behind him as he begrudgingly descended downstairs “Thank you. You’re the best!”

Cooking was something he’d gotten good at fast working for Twilight. He had started out sloppy but soon he’d really gotten the hang of it thanks to practice coupled with helpful cookbooks. He wasn’t super creative like Pinkie Pie with her amazing ability to combine ingredients to produce sometimes weird, but mostly incredible dishes for her friends. Another reason he enjoyed cooking too was that great feeling of satisfaction knowing he made someone else happy. He whistled a little tune pouring the batter into the waffle maker before blowing green flame inside. In a matter of minutes he had a stack of blueberry-nutmeg waffles and a small cup of minty herbal tea set on the small table.

“Smells good Spike, oh I’m being so unsupportive it *always* smells delicious,” complimented Twilight slowly descending the stairs. “I bought some fresh refined quartz for you last weekend that I’d forgotten about. It’s in a baggie above the sink cupboard. Help yourself!”

Spike squealed a not very boyish squeal darting into the kitchen. He *loved* quartz, especially when it was refined. Gemstones were great but getting hold of good clean crispy quartz was impossible around Ponyville. Wolfing down two divots he turned back into the kitchen.

“Aw thanks so much Twilight this is really cool of you to....Twilight? Is something wrong with the food?”

The triple stack of waffles sat untouched, still steaming in front of her.

Perhaps it was the dimness of early morning but to him Twilight didn't look right to him. Mane and hair were rightfully frizzled from bed head but the fringe above her forehead was damp, glued to her brow with sweat. When she turned to look at him her purple eyes had lost their usual gleam too.

"Nothings wrong Spike I just don't...feel like eating I guess," she muttered weakly.

"Uh-uh. No way. My waffles are *always* awesome. 'Sides you didn't even take a bite yet so how would you even know?"

Twilight looked at him glumly, beads of sweat rolling off her nose and onto the table "I'm sorry. I thought I would be hungry as usual but I-"

"OH!" Spike bolted into the kitchen to a small drawer. "Dumb Spike, how could you forget the jam?" he mumbled grabbing at a jar. With a butter knife in hand he hopped back over to the table.

"Don't panic Twilight! I've got this breakfast under control," assured Spike slathering a fair amount of strawberry jam onto the toasted stack of waffles.

"I...I think that's what was missing!" she said with a little smile growing on her face. "Thanks a billion Spike! You saved breakfast!"

He laughed taking a bite of the crunchy quartz, "Glad I could help!"

Quartz was really the tastiest mineral of them all, despite him not actually sampling every kind of crystal. It was something Spike ate slowly to savor that airy flavor. He was practically dainty compared to Twilight who was eagerly tearing into those waffles. Specks of gooey red jam flecked on the tablecloth, the glass of untouched tea and were even smattering on her face and hair. The quartz fell away from his mouth as he stared in abject wonder at how much energy Twilight was putting into eating those waffles.

"Wow....I uh. Do you want me to make more?" asked Spike watching Twilight drag her tongue around the plate, literally licking it clean.

Twilight furrowed her brow at him, taking Spike by surprise. That instant 'yes' he presumed did not happen, "I think I'm done..."

Collecting her plate and still full glass he toddled over to the sink. The nutmeg was something new he'd added today. He had to make some for Pinkie so she could see how good they were.

"HHHURRMPFFFFF"

Spike dropped the plate into the sink and turned around. Twilight had a hoof shoved in her mouth. Her cheeks were swollen, eyes twitching.

"Are you feeling all right?" Spike asked at last, slowly walking back to the table.

Twilight shook her head feebly. She lurched forwards on the table; her cheeks swelling bigger before pulling her hoof away to vomit her breakfast onto

the table.

Spike yelped, dashing over to the table to pull Twilights' purple mane away from her face. She'd been sick like this twice before so he knew what to do when her stomach rebelled against her like this. The rest of her breakfast continued sliding out of her throat onto the table in a gooey pile of chunks and bile. Twilight heaved, coughing up spittle as her retching slowed to a dribble.

"I'm...sorry," apologized Twilight softly as Spike released his grip, letting her frizzy hair fall back into place. "I'm so so sorry I..."

"Hey, it's no biggie! Really!" he said with a sincere smile. "It's stuff that happens. I'm not mad at you and you've got nothin' to be sorry about. It was probably too much nutmeg..."

Spike gave her a tight hug. Hugs always made him feel better when he was ill. Now pulling away from her he knew for sure it wasn't his food that made her sick.

"Holy smokes Twilight! You're burning up!" he placed a claw to her sweaty forehead, feeling a temperature high enough that he knew a thermometer would not necessitate a double-check.

"R-really?" she sputtered in response sitting back in her chair. "I don't feel hot though I feel...cold."

He jumped off the chair he'd been standing on, nudging her back up "C'mon, we're going to pony general right now," he said firmly, walking to the front door. He heard gentle hoofsteps behind him while opening the door.

"Let's go I-TWILIGHT!" he shouted in shock. The unicorn had fainted halfway to the door, her head making a loud slamming sound on the library floor. "I gotcha Twilight. Please don't be dead! We can get to the hospital! I'll get ya to the hospital!"

With strength he didn't know he possessed he lifted the clammy unicorn above his head, resting her chest on his shoulder. Her legs were dragging beneath him and he was feeling the strain on his upper body but her shallow panting on his scales spurred him outside in a steady pace. Her eyes weren't quite closed, but they were rolled up her head a little, unfocused. He had his own dead set on the squattish building in the distance. Taking a deep breath he started that long march to the hospital.

...and that's everything that happened this morning Doc," concluded Spike softly, twisting his tail in his claws. He'd replayed the event in his head a hundred times over. Speaking them out loud was more difficult than he imagined.

The doctor pulled his light-silver eyes away from the reference book he found earlier. No longer a hunch, he had to admit to himself and the little dragon exactly what had befallen young Twilight Sparkle. The evidence was simply overwhelming. He shot a grave stare at the sleeping filly on the stretcher before turning to Spike.

"I'm afraid that your friend here...is suffering from Porphyric Hemophilia," he finally announced.

"That's terrible! Oh gosh! Oh my gosh....what is that?"

Really he should have been expecting that response "It's a blood disease. Highly contagious. Highly infectious. Caught in the early stages the virus can be stopped before it takes complete hold of the victim which-"

"So what's *that* mean?" he interrupted again, leaning forwards on his chair. "She can be cured?"

Exhaling the deep breath he'd been holding in the doctor said "No. The virus has been replicating inside of her for too long. The antidote would be useless against her. There's nothing I can do to cure her. I'm sorry Spike."

He trotted past the little dragon, who was trying to hold in his snuffles. Opening the nearby closet he dug around the back looking for a pair of heavy magical restraints he'd found stowed in there when he first took over the clinic. He'd never thought he'd need them now. Finding them, he tugged them out of the closet, dragging them over to the bedside.

"Spike?" he questioned the dragon still quietly sitting with his tail clutched in his claws. Tears were openly streaming down his face now.

"Spike," repeated the doctor "I'm not being...entirely clear with you on Twilights condition. She isn't going to die."

His response was a hiccup, the little dragon turned towards him. "W-what?"

"Twilight Sparkle will *not* be dying anytime soon," continued the doctor. He took his patients limp hoof, tying one chain to her and locking it to a latch on the floor.

"I d-d-don't understand doc..."

Saying this aloud was going to be troubling. It was unheard of around Equestria this day and age. He motioned to Spike to come closer to the bedside, pointing a hoof to her neck.

"Sometime between last night and this morning your friend was feasted upon by a vampire," he finally said, admitting the words he thought he'd never had to utter. "A direct bite and subsequent draining of the neck spurs the transformation from normal Equine to vampire twice as quickly as a contact wound."

"V-vampires?" stuttered Spike brushing aside Twilights mane. There were two small holes on her neck he'd missed earlier. They blended into her coat very

well. "I thought v-vampires were an old mare's-"

"-tale yes I know," finished the doctor turning his attention to her other purple hoof. "It's not. It's the result of prolonged exposure to a blood disease. A disease like any other. A disease thought extinct here centuries ago."

He clasped Twilights other hoof in chain, latching it to the other side of the floor. Very carefully he slipped a small matching pewter cap over the length of her horn. "Growing allergies to garlic, silver, sunlight, cold sweats, fatigue during the day, aversion to solid food, forced bodily rejection of ingested food...it all fits. Your young friend isn't under any sedatives. She's in a deep sleep because that's how vampires are. They slumber during daylight hours and are typically active from dusk till dawn."

Movies and books always taught Spike that vampires were a myth. Something grouped alongside zombies or aliens. Now this doctor was telling him that Twilight was bitten by one, and was well on her way to becoming one too? He was speechless. The doctor resumed speaking.

"What I can do in the meantime is keep her here. I can't tell you how she'll act when she wakes up at dusk. By that time she shall be fully transformed under the effects of vampirism. These engraved chains will hold her for...I don't know how long. I'm aware that she's a quite powerful unicorn. With the added strengths of vampirism coupled with her need to satiate her bloodlust I fear she will be quite difficult to stop if she does choose to escape."

Spike leaned forward on the bed. Twilight was sleeping so peacefully, chest rising and falling in a steady rhythm under the plain white bedsheets. Yet the doctor had clasped the slim unicorn in special enchanted chains. He took out a pen, slipping it under Twilights upper lips and pulled them upwards.

"Holy guacamole! She....she has *fangs*," whispered Spike when he saw the curved teeth growing from her upper jaw. The doctor removed his pen; Spike could still see the white tips of the long fangs poking out from her mouth.

"Now...for the hard questions," the doctor faced Spike with a notepad out. "Do you have the slightest idea how this could have happened?"

"Uh.....no, not really."

"Dig up any graves recently?"

"Gross....no."

"Experiment with any black magic?"

"Not in that library nope."

"Perform untested alchemy of any kind?"

"Not sure what that is so no."

"Survey any dark cool roosting grounds such as a cellar, mine, cave or quarry?"

Spike stopped shaking his head there. “Did you say *cave*?”

The Ursas den was as intimidating as Rarity remembered, being so large while at the same time reminding her how closed in she was. Exile was something she’d always pictured as something far up north near the Appalachians huddled in a log cabin where she would drink unfiltered spring water and eat minty pine flavored meals. Despite *wanting* to change course she found herself drawn back to the cave. There would hopefully be answers here as to what was happening to her and why she was doing the things she’d done.

“If any of you goblins are still here you can expect no sympathy for me!” she said aloud to nobody in particular. Saying it did boost her confidence a little. Perhaps she *could* find a way to return this situation she’d been swallowed up in to normalcy. She had been trotting through the cave for hours now being way beyond the outer den where the star bears had rested. For being a dark cave with no sunlight peeking there was no worries about bumping into things. She was navigating quite well for herself, taking note of broken stalactites or odd crops of rock to ensure that if need be there would be a way to escape. No aching was felt from her shoulders or legs either despite the long walk. Rarity’s trip through the winding tunnels of this cave had expended her energy reserves though. Twenty minutes ago she was feeling peckish. Now her stomach was growling loudly every few steps.

“Mmm...what a way to go,” she mused to herself, “starvation....alone and forgotten in some musty old cave on the outskirts of town. Well I suppose you *do* deserve it Rarity, you shall waste away as an anonymous monster.”

With a very theatrical motion she slumped forwards onto the ground, not even minding the dirt she was stirring up. Pointless now was the idea of keeping up appearances if her only witnesses to death were the brown bats snoozing above her. Shutting her eyes she let her head slide to the cold cave floor, waiting in the silence for her slow demise to come for her.

“What’s that?” her ears perked up. There was an unfamiliar sound echoing far up ahead. She strained to listen. It repeated! A little softer but there was a clinking noise. Rarity stood on shaky legs then went to continue further down the tunnel, trying to keep her breathing in check.

The room the tunnel led to was not like any previous one. It looked to have been slightly excavated, the vaulted ceiling being larger and dome shaped in appearance. Luminescent mushrooms grew from patches of soil in various spots, casting long green shadows. Several large boulders were clumped in the far rear of

the room near a clear pool of water that had its source dripping down into it with quiet plinking noises. Rarity took all this in before her eyes narrowed to the animal in the center of the room.

It was a ram. One of the rams she'd passed by on her mad dash to the bathroom yesterday evening in the restaurant. Its stubby legs were bound in rusted iron chain.

"Oh my stars! Are you okay sir? What am I saying of *course* you're not okay let me get you out of there!" she exclaimed running over to him. The ram muffled a response, beady amber eyes bulging out his pugnacious face. Rarity removed the gag from his mouth.

"Up yours lady!" he bleated angrily. He attempted a sort of head butt before falling forwards off his hooves. The fat ram rolled a little before ending upside down.

Rarity was less than pleased at his attitude "Excuse me, but I am *attempting* a rescue. Assuming you want to be 'hog-tied' in this ghastly environment then by all means if you continue this rudeness--"

The ram spat in her face. Rarity recoiled, the saliva dripping down her cheek. Shaking with fury she wiped it off with her hooves. "WHAT is your PROBLEM!?"

"He knows what's coming," boomed an unseen voice.

Rarity screamed, looking for the source of the voice. Cold laughter echoed off the walls.

"Be still unicorn. Does your stomach not ache from your journey? Does your throat not crack from being so dry?" the deep voice continued, echoing all around her.

"Wha-What do you want from me! Who is that?!" Rarity replied with her azure eyes still darting around the bleak room, "Also my bodily functions are my own business thank you very much!" It was impossible to pinpoint exactly where it was coming from.

"It's what you want. What you need. Do not deny what your body demands," said the voice, taking a much smoother tone, "If you drop from exhaustion how could you find time to learn about what's happening to you?"

Tongue caught in her throat she glanced back to the ram struggling on the ground behind her.

"So please, drink your fill so that we may talk. Our silence will resume until you are finished," concluded the voice. All the hushed chatter going on behind the rocks vanished instantly. It was just chain scraping against rock and the pounding heartbeat in her ears now.

Rarity trotted back over to the ram who was once again gagged somehow.

She locked eyes with him “I’m sorry I have to do this to you. This...is something I must clear up.”

So Rarity moved closer. The ram redoubled his struggling.

“Please don’t make this any more difficult. If there was any other option I would take it,” her mouth was beginning to water. The word ‘drink’ echoed in her mind over and over again. The ram was twisting wildly now, looking at her in a mixture of boiling rage and fear.

“Stop fidgeting so much will you,” she commanded. The ram went limp. His head rolled backwards, neck fully displayed. Less remorse was felt for what she was about to do now. Partly because she had no ties to this victim. Mostly because he had *spat* in her face. Descending her head, she opened her mouth widely to clamp down on his large neck. The thick hot liquid flowed in her mouth and Rarity began to drink deeply, her mind again going blank as she gave herself up to the pleasurable taste of his blood gushing into her mouth.

Up high, behind the three largest boulders, the owner of the booming voice was cracking a smile.

“You see that Morsemere? How quickly he was subdued? The look of ecstasy crossing her lips as she feeds? Of the six that entered *this* pony was the true prize. Ravishing beauty, intelligence, willing to reason, willing to *feast*,” he licked his lips, “At first I thought her suitable. I know she will make a perfect queen.”

Morsemere peered over the rock. The white pony remained fixated at the throat of the fat ram he had stolen from the tail end of its herd last night.

“She’s not completely turned Jo’sun,” he finally said, “Your *queen* has fed only twice now according to Valerie.”

“I have in mind already the third meal for her,” he grinned with confidence in his voice, “in due time she will be fully turned, as would the first victim she fed upon. I expect to see her soon enough as well.” Rarity had removed her mouth from the ram, sitting patiently on the ground as instructed.

“Come Morsemere. Let us go entertain our guest.”

“Your yankin’ my tail here Spike. Vampires? Ya’ll can’t think of a less, I dunno, impossible di-agnosis?”

Applejack was sitting in the lobby of pony general with Pinkie Pie and Spike. The doctor had prescribed her bed rest if she wanted the throbbing in her head to go away so she’d taken the day off work. Now here she was stuck in the hospital again being told her friend was turning into some kind of fantastical

monster.

“It’s all true! The doctor said so! I saw proof!”

“Proof?” snorted Applejack “I’d take any ‘proof’ from that ol’ quack with a grain of salt. I came ‘round here after a chili eatin’ contest once ‘cause I had stomach problems,” she gave Pinkie a knowing look, who turned away to hide her giggling, “he gone an’ said I was three months preggers. What a load a’ hooey!”

Pinkie Pie patted Spike on the head “Don’t feel bad Spike. Applejack here is just being a grumpy grump pants because she got her head hurt. I believe you completely!”

Applejack just sighed in defeat. No sense in stirring up a senseless argument with Pinkie now. “Ya’ll told Rainbow Dash to get the other two right?” she asked absentmindedly rubbing at her eyes.

“Dashie should be here any minute! Or longer because sometimes Fluttershy is a bit of a slowpony,” she replied propping a hoof under her chin.

The door to the infirmary swung open with a bang as a multicolored blur sped through. A not so blurry yellow-pink pony drifted in right behind her.

“Criminy Dash, can’t ya avoid makin’ your grand entrances for just a day? It’s really none too difficult to jus’ open the door with your hoof,” scolded Applejack as Dash pulled herself off the mess of chairs she’d crashed into.

“Keep your hat on AJ. Nopony got hurt,” buffered Dash removing a very splintered piece of chair from her left wing.

“Um, actually Rainbow Dash, I would say you and Applejack were the most hurt...” interjected Fluttershy before hiding behind her pink hair.

As bad as Applejacks concussion was it was Rainbow Dash who had ended up looking the worst off. She had many blue bandages covering her face, forelegs and chest. Dash had valiantly charged the goblins head-on. Punching, kicking, tossing them in the air and generally raising all hell inside the cave. Two black eyes weren’t something that could be bandaged but Dash wore them proudly, boasting to everyone who’d listen about how she took on an entire goblin horde.

“Before you ask I went to check Rarity’s place. She’s not home and I’m not gonna go check every store in town cuz she might be shopping,” Dash casually flipped her hair away from her face, “So we’ll poke around later for her.”

Applejack frowned again; she was doing that a lot lately “Well I can’t hold it against ya’ll for goin’ outta your way to check the Boutique. Although she really should be ‘round town somewhere...girl doesn’t exactly blend with the crowd ya know.”

“Attention everypony!” cried out Nurse Redheart from the counter. “Could you all please walk through the door in an orderly fashion? The doctor will see you now. Your friend is awake.”

“It’s cold.”

The doctor shifted on his hooves “You know very well *that* has to be kept on ice for preservation reasons. I’m sorry, but that’s the best I can do for you.”

“Try to do better for me.”

“You’re aware it’s not easy to just get this for you right?”

“*This* is hard to *get* in the town *hospital*? That’s a good one.”

There were hoofsteps behind him in the hallway. He was relived a little, knowing that he wouldn’t be alone in the room with the unicorn. Even with his back turned he could *feel* her gaze boring into him. The door swung open and a small troop of ponies filed inside, lining up next to each other across the room.

“Hiya there!” bubbled Pinkie Pie “How ya feeling Twilight?”

Twilight was quietly sipping from a little blue cup in her stretcher “Hungry.”

“Ya’ll...definitely don’t *look* yourself today sugarcube,” Applejack said with mild concern in her voice, “Didja hear your diagnosis ye-”

“What’s wrong with your coat? Also why are you in shackles?” interrupted Dash not waiting for Applejack to finish.

That was the most striking visual change for Twilight since Spike had last seen her a few hours ago. Her once grape purple coat had paled into a much lighter shade of lavender. If not for the stripes in her hair she could have passed as a spitting image of her own mother. Spikes eyes were focusing on Twilights mouth. Every few words she spoke he could see her white vampire fangs poking past her lips.

“I *heard* my diagnosis,” Twilight said flatly with her eyes on Applejack, they dragged over to Dash, “There’s nothing *wrong* with my coat Rainbow Dash.”

“Well sorry geez Twi I’m just askin’ ya don’t gotta be so snappy about it,” replied Dash irritably, ruffling her feathers.

“So...ummm,” Spike was feeling nervous. Twilight was alive! He should be happy even if she was a vampire. He was forgetting his question. Pinkie already asked how she was feeling. Twilight continued sipping from her cup, “sooo....what do you think of the situation you’re in?”

The room was filled with the loud sound of a straw sucking air. The blue cup was empty. Twilight turned to the doctor.

“May I have some more please?” she asked with feigned politeness. The doctor took the cup in silence, being sure to not look into those reddening eyes as he left the room. The pupils had begun to narrow into thin slits.

Rainbow Dash was through with this nonsense, “Alright, somepony give me

answers right *now* because aside from Twilight acting weird she looks fine to me.”

Spike started explaining but Twilight waved a dismissive hoof at him, clearing her throat loudly, “Last night while I was asleep in my library a vampire stopped by and had me for dinner-”

“A vampire!?” interrupted Dash again, “What a load of horse-”

SHHHHHHHHHH went the voices in the room. Twilight continued:

“-when I woke up I was sick from the virus and woozy from loss of blood. I was achy, tired and I threw up my breakfast before fainting. Spike took me to this hospital where due to a completely inexcusable lack of knowledge regarding my condition the disease festered inside of me until I passed the point of no return. Now...I am a vampire.”

The door behind them creaked open on squeaky hinges. The doctor returned, holding the blue cup gingerly by the handle in his mouth. The two Pegasi flinched, suddenly aware of exactly what was in that blue cup. He walked over to Twilight placing it in front of her. She took one look inside and leered at him.

“This cup is half-empty.”

“Don’t be so pessimistic, it’s half-full. A little more so I believe.”

“I don’t want a half-*full* cup,” she specified, “Give me a full cup.”

“Afraid I can’t have that since we’re running low on reserves.”

“So you go run up some donations. I am **hungry**,” hissed Twilight pointing a hoof at him, chains clanking noisily at the sudden movement.

The doctor didn’t move, “You won’t be getting any more missy. Not tonight.”

“Why deny me it anyway?! I don’t care if it’s cold anymore! It’s making your patient feel *better*!” she protested, her voice rising in volume.

“That...is why I am cutting you off,” he said quietly.

Twilight’s face contorted in anger. Throwing her head back she screamed, pulling hard at the restraints clasped to her hooves. The chains creaked and squealed from the pressure. The floorboards around the latches splintered, bits of wood flying upwards. Her friends gasped at the outburst and the doctor herded them out of the room.

“Land sakes! Did ya’ll see them chains splinterin’ like they were nothin’? I can’t believe what I just saw!” stammered Applejack out in the lobby. They were all shaken up from what they’ve seen of Twilight.

“They’ll hold I can promise you that,” assured the doctor wheeling out some cups of cold water. Applejack downed hers at once, “They’re engraved pewter so

they won't burn her skin. The latches themselves are actually hooked into a vein of granite under the hospital," he was trying very hard to sound sure of himself.

"How do ya fix her doc?" asked Dash tensely. She felt her wings finally settling back down against her sides as the shock slowly wore off.

Unbecoming of the situation he sat on the floor "Twilight Sparkle is beyond fixing now. The most I can do now is stave off her bodily desire for fresh blood. If the situation worsens we'll have no choice but to put her down with that silver stake pinning the calendar to the wall over there."

Fluttershy gasped louder than the others "That can't happen! Is there any other way!?"

"Medically there is no way for any living doctor to reverse this. I doubt even Princess Celestia or her sister could intervene to reverse this condition," he said hanging his head.

Nobody spoke for a few minutes. Spike had begun sniffing again, trying hard to not cry out loud. Even the usually upbeat attitude Pinkie Pie wore had sunk below her crestfallen face.

"Figuratively speaking there should be another way to revert her back to the way she was...."

"WHAT?!" shouted Applejack "What's it then? If ya'll know any way to fix 'er then spit it out Doc!"

They all ganged up on him waiting for the answer. He stumbled backwards to one of the wooden chairs, mild claustrophobia clouding his thoughts.

"As I said it isn't a *medical* solution that could fix her condition. This is just completely hypothetical thinking that I'm recalling from childhood stories. Something you may not be aware of."

"It's something to go on right? So tell us already!" pressured Dash, wings flaring open in frustration.

"Myth has it that destroying the vampire that infected its victim would essentially cure the sufferer of its curse. The one who infected the one before would cure those two and so on and so forth. This is of course *complete* hearsay that isn't backed up by *any* sort of scientific fact to go on."

"Good enough for me!" cried Applejack in glee, "Alls we gotta do is hunt down that nasty stinkin' vampire an' shove that stake through 'em and we'll have good ol' Twilight back to her usual self in no time!"

Pinkie Pie jumped up in joy, "That's a super-iffic idea! We just got to get our little rumps moving to that cave! So what are we waitin' for girls!?"

"Applejack you are in no condition to be adventuring with your recent cranial damages. Please stay here in the clinic with me to keep your friend company," insisted the Doctor removing her hat to inspect the white bandages

around her head.

“.....fine. I’ll stay here then. I suppose wrasslin’ with them goblins was enough for this pony,” she admitted begrudgingly grabbing at her hat, “ya’ll go an’ fetch my brother then after we get Rarity. I’m sure that he’ll be more than willin’ to help take out any bloodsuckin’ freaks in that cave.”

“Um....girls....I think that I should tell you something that I just remembered...” whispered Fluttershy, the words barely brushing past her lips “about Rarity.”

“What about sugarcube? If ya know where she is in town we can get her prissy little behind to go with ya’ll to the cave,” said Applejack with some irritation in her voice. The doctor was removing her bandages to replace them with a fresh set.

“I was just remembering that when we had dinner at Seasonal Delights yesterday evening that Rarity wasn’t, um, feeling too well,” she eeked out, turquoise eyes shaking.

By now the doctor had halted his mechanical movements wrapping the fresh bandages around Applejack’s head. He looked at Fluttershy intently “Did she tell you how she was feeling?”

Fluttershy bowed her head, frightened now at the plausible scenario she was putting forth, “Rarity was telling me that she had woken up late after a restless night’s sleep, then about how the heat was doing awful things to her hair, making her achy and tired. So when we got our food she um...didn’t eat much of it all. Instead she had about six full glasses of strawberry juice before she, um...ran to the bathroom to throw it up.”

Identical looks of genuine shock were plastered across the faces of each pony in the room. The doctor leaned forwards in his chair, “Do you recall anything else from the dinner?”

Now she was slumping to the floor, “Yes...Rarity said when she got separated from us in the cave...something leapt at her in the darkness,” Fluttershy gulped.

“...something that left barely a scrape on her neck.”

To be concluded...